

What struck me most about the birds of the New Hebrides was their extreme wildness, nearly all have to be stalked with the greatest care. I expect, when the islands were more densely populated, small birds were much hunted with bows and arrows for food. As an instance of the decrease of population, the island of Aneityun had by census a population of 3500 in 1859, to-day it has barely 500; Futuna by census a population of 970 in 1870, to-day barely 300.

It is sad to think of these fair islands being swept of their inhabitants; one is inclined to ask if these people were not more comfortable in their days of cannibalism and heathendom than now, when to their other vices they have added those of the white man and his diseases, which have, I fear, taken a quicker hold than the tenets of christianity, in spite of the earnest work of courageous missionaries, to whose kindness and assistance I owe so much.

XXXIX.—*Description of some Nests and Eggs from New Guinea.* By D. LE SOUËF, C.M.Z.S., Melbourne.

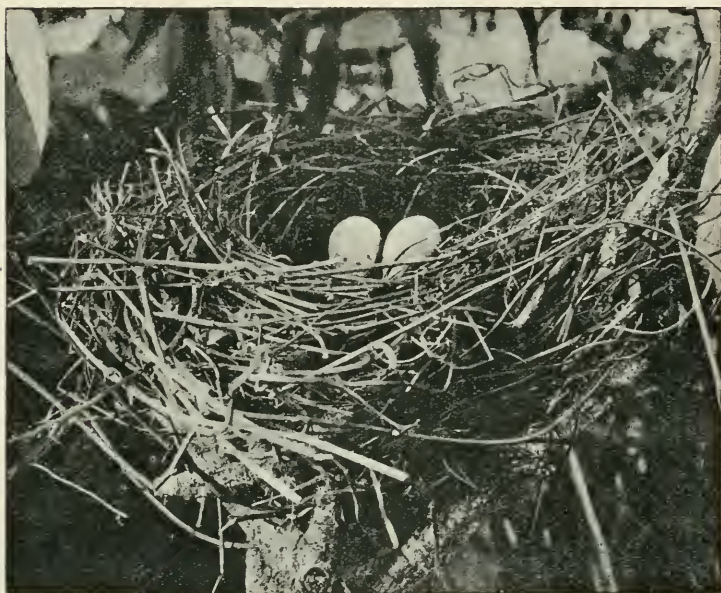
MANUCODIA ATRA. (Glossy-mantled Manucode.)

This bird is found generally over New Guinea and also on the adjacent islands, and is especially plentiful in the southern districts. They seem to keep in the dense scrub and are very shy, but can easily be brought up by imitating their drawn-out plaintive whistle. A nest of this bird was found by Mr. C. Barnard on October 6th, 1899, on Sariba Island, which is about four miles from the S.E. coast of New Guinea. The nest was situated about 25 feet from the ground, in a large mangrove-tree near the beach, the water at high tide surrounding the tree. When taking the nest the birds flew about in evident distress, but did not attack the intruder in any way. Mr. Barnard saw another bird on Nov. 2nd carrying twigs in her bill, apparently to build her nest with, but he lost sight of her in the thick scrub.

The nest (fig. 1, p. 613) is an open structure, being composed

of twigs and vine-tendrils and lined with the same material, only finer: its external diameter is 11 inches, internal 6 inches; external depth 5 inches, internal 3 inches. There were two eggs in the nest, which is the full clutch: their ground-colour is a purplish white, covered more or less with

Fig. 1.

Nest and eggs of *Mamcodia atra*.

minute blackish freckles, and also having a few larger dots of a dark purplish brown, and some blotches of a much lighter hue, mostly on the larger end; the markings under the surface are very light purple. They measure: A 1.50×1.4 , B 1.51×1.3 inch.

PHILEMON NOVÆ-GUINÆÆ. (New Guinea Helmeted Friar-bird.)

These noisy birds are fairly plentiful in the open forest country near the coast and on the adjacent islands of Southern New Guinea. They often congregate together on fig and

other trees when feeding, and their loud curious note can be heard for a considerable distance. Mr. C. Barnard found one of their bulky open nests on October 30th, 1899, on Sariba Island (see fig. 2) ; it was suspended in a fork of a branch about 30 feet from the ground. It is a large loosely-built struc-

Fig. 2.

Nest and eggs of *Philemon novæ-guinææ*.

ture and deep, and is composed of lawyer palm-leaves and vine-tendrils, intermixed with a little cobweb ; many of the tendrils were frayed out, giving the nest a ragged appearance ; it was lined with fine tendrils and a few broken leaves : its external diameter is 6 inches, internal $3\frac{1}{2}$; external depth

6 inches, internal 4. There were three fresh eggs in the nest, which probably constitutes the full clutch. They have a light cream ground-colour, plentifully marked with elongated reddish-brown blotches, some overlaying others and of varying density, but more plentiful on the larger end; the markings under the surface are light purple. They measure: A 1.27×0.90 , B 1.30×0.91 , C 1.28×0.87 inch.

GRAUCALUS PAPUENSIS.

This bird is very similar to *G. mentalis*, especially in certain phases of its plumage. Mr. Barnard saw a few at Sariba Island, and generally noticed them singly. He found a nest containing one young bird, built on a tree which overhung the water at high tide. Another nest was found on October 30th, 1899, with one fresh egg; it was built in a fork of a breadfruit-tree, about 30 yards from a native village and in open country. The bird flew right away as soon as the nest was approached; it was an open shallow structure and difficult to distinguish from any distance; it is composed of vine-tendrils and fine twigs and covered with cobwebs, on which are fastened pieces of lichen; it measures—external diameter 3 inches, internal 2; external depth $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch, internal $\frac{1}{2}$. The single egg is somewhat similar to that of *G. lineatus*, but very different from those of the other members of the family. Its ground-colour is a delicate pale green, with dark brown markings, mostly on the larger end, where they form an irregular zone; the markings under the surface are grey. It measures 1.20×0.80 inch.

PTILOTIS GRACILIS.

Mr. Barnard secured a specimen of this bird on Sariba Island, which is interesting, for, so far as I know, it has been recorded only from N.E. Australia. The birds were far from shy, remaining on their nests until the intruder was right alongside. Two nests were found, both containing two eggs. They were built of frayed grass, broken leaves, and cobwebs, and lined inside with the white down from the seed-pod of the native cotton-tree. They were suspended

from a thin fork near the end of a branch, and measure—external diameter $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches, internal 2; external depth $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches, internal $1\frac{3}{4}$. The eggs are slightly larger and lighter in colour than those found in Australia, having a pale reddish-white ground-colour, with a zone round the larger end of very dark brown markings; the smaller end is very blunt; and they measure: A 0.86×0.58 , B 0.79×0.56 inch.

PTILOPUS CORONULATUS.

These beautiful little Green Fruit-Pigeons are most difficult to detect among the thick green foliage in which they make their home, and one is fortunate to be able to secure a specimen. They have the curious habit of laying their single egg on the leaf of a palm-tree, as when these large leaves branch out horizontally they are slightly concave, and often have a few dead leaves and twigs on their surface that have fallen from the surrounding trees. This Pigeon just lays its egg on the leaf, but makes no nest of any kind, and directly anyone approaches the sitting bird darts off and flies away as if wounded, and is soon lost to sight; but Mr. Barnard succeeded in securing one bird as it flew off its egg, which was on a palm-leaf about $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet from the ground. The egg is creamy white and an elongated oval, and measures 1.24×0.72 inch.

DACELO GAUDICHAUDI.

Mr. Barnard noticed these birds generally in the dense scrub, both on the hill-tops and near the beach. They were plentiful, and generally seen in pairs, but occasionally a few birds congregated together to utter their curious note in chorus; it is something like the laughing sound made by the *Dacelo gigas*, but not so loud. If their eggs are well incubated, they dart at the intruder if he goes near the nest; but if the eggs are fresh they do not, but only fly about close by. Mr. Barnard found four of their nests on Sariba Island. They were hollows made in the mounds which the termites had constructed in the trees, of varying heights from the ground, from 4 to about 40 feet. The nest has no

lining; they lay their eggs on the dry soil, of which the mound is composed. The hole the birds make is small compared with the size of the birds themselves. Two eggs are laid, being pure white and well glossed. They measure: A 1.58×1.14 , B 1.48×1.15 inch. These specimens were found on the 4th of October, 1899.

XI.—*The Birds of North Queensland.*—Part I. *On two Collections from Cooktown and the Neighbourhood of Cairns.*

By HERBERT C. ROBINSON and W. S. LAVEROCK, M.A.,
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ABOUT the middle of last year Mr. E. Olive of Cooktown, a port situated on the east coast of Queensland, about 400 miles south of Cape York, the northernmost point of Australia, sent to one of us a small collection of birds which, though limited in extent, contained examples of several species of considerable interest. At our suggestion he somewhat later proceeded to Cairns, some 100 miles south of Cooktown, where he collected on the slopes of the Bellenden-Ker mountains, which attain an altitude of 5500 feet, being the highest in Queensland. The collections there formed were principally from the lower slopes of Mount Sapphiri (which is probably the Mount Sophia of the Admiralty Chart), and from Mount Bellenden Ker itself, which was ascended on three occasions. Here a camp was formed for about a week at an altitude of somewhat over 4000 feet, whence the mountain was worked to the summit. The collections from high elevations are unfortunately not so exhaustive as might have been hoped, for, owing to the unusual wetness of the season the mountain was enveloped in a perpetual fog, which made collecting a matter of extreme difficulty, and in addition the majority of the birds were in full moult.

Nevertheless the material obtained does not appear to bear out Mr. De Vis's statement (Rep. Scient. Exp. N.E.